

APPROVED
Union Township Environmental Commission
Minutes of the March 11, 2008 Regular Meeting

The March 11, 2008 Regular Meeting of the Union Township Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:03 PM.

The notice of meeting as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier-News satisfied the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act, and was also posted in the Municipal Building, on the Union Township website and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

I. Roll call:

Present: Robert Nargi, Sandy Stiger, Michele McBride, Bill Harclerode, Stephen Hurford, Kathleen Corcoran

Absent: Bob Beylickjian

Public: Frank Mazza, Matt Severino, John Wingler, V.J. DiRoberto, Shawn Crouse, Rick Steffey, Neil Davis

Others: Christine Altomari (Princeton Hydro), George Howard (Franklin EC)

II. Approval of Minutes:

Approval of the minutes from the January, 2008 meeting was moved by Mrs. McBride and seconded by Mr. Harclerode, and approved by a 6-0 vote.

III. Discussion of UTEC Newsletter:

Mr. Nargi thanked Gary Pyner, Vice President of Marketing at Ikaria, for Ikaria's generous donation, which covered the printing costs for the Newsletter. Mr. Nargi also extended the Environmental Commission's thanks to Neil Davis and Michele McBride for their generous time and efforts working on preparing the newsletter. Ms. McBride added that Mr. Davis put in about 100 hours of his time on the document, and he did a fantastic job. The document would not be what it is without his generous efforts.

IV. Presentation Re: Sidney Brook Study:

Mr. Nargi introduced Christine Altomari of Princeton Hydro, Rick Steffey of the Hunterdon County Planning Board and Bruce Dudley, who are also part of the project. Ms. Altomari began the presentation by thanking everyone for their support of the project. Ms. Altomari discussed the parties involved, with Princeton Hydro as a subcontractor, the project is funded by the NJDEP under a Clean Water Act 319 grant with Nick Zripko as project manager, Bob Nargi is the Union Twp. Project Manager. Other parties involved are Bruce Suzio? of Franklin Twp., Kathy Hale of NJWSA, Rick Steffey of the Hunterdon County Planning Board and including New Jersey Watershed Americorps Ambassadors, interns working for NJDEP providing help in the study.

Ms. Altomari made a presentation to the UTEC and the audience regarding the Sidney Brook Study. Total grant funding was \$237,000, and was received last October. The Township must use \$32,000 worth of in-kind contributions. The UTEC newsletter counts toward in-kind service. Sidney Brook Watershed is 5 square miles, with 10 linear miles of river and 9 acres of lakes, and is located in the North and South branches of the Raritan River. The Brook was awarded Category 1 status in 2003 during the McGreevey administration, because it flows to a drinking water reservoir, which requires a 300 ft. protection buffer on both sides of the stream. It is also a trout stream and is habitat for bog turtle (federally threatened) and wood turtle (state threatened). The state believes that the biological health of the stream (benthic macroinvertebrates) is good. The Sidney Brook does have flooding issues and erosion (high sediment loading) issues. New development is not allowed to degrade the quality of the stream. The purpose of the study is to get a baseline on the health of the stream, because there is no chemical analysis data, such as dissolved oxygen, nutrient loadings, fertilizers and pesticides. The study will include walking the stream, visual assessments of outfalls, erosion and other issues, and sampling. Work must be done in accordance with the NJDEP approved protocol. Ms. Altomari stated that access must be

granted by property owners in order to conduct the study on private properties. Ms. Altomari asked for those that are homeowners along the brook to provide access for the study. The sampling will probably start in May 2008, during both dry and storm conditions. Sampling will include chemical sampling (dissolved oxygen, nutrient, sediment loadings), biological/bacteriological (pathogens) sampling and temperature measurements and fish samples. The study will conclude with a report (probably next winter) and recommendations for five or ten different projects with expected costs. This study will help the Township become eligible for more funding from the NJDEP for improvements. The Township would decide which projects they would request funding for. Grant eligible repairs would have to be public land, or on conservation easements of private property.

Various photos were shown of problem erosion areas along the stream, which may be at least partially averted by allowing vegetation to grow upstream from the brook. Problem areas in the Township include Finn Road Park and the school. There was some discussion with the audience about potential remedies for problem areas, including now mowing upstream areas and increasing plantings, and creating retention basins to hold (up to 72 hours) and infiltrate runoff.

A copy of Ms. Altomari's presentation will be placed on the Union Township Website.

Shawn Crouse extended his services on behalf of the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, at no cost, to help in the surveying services for the brook. There was some discussing regarding trout stocking and dropping the fish off of a bridge. Mr. Crouse stated that the fish are not physically harmed unless they are thrown on a rock. The bridge dropping of the fish is in the interest of time.

There was some discussion regarding bog turtles along Sidney Brook. Ms. Altomari stated that she is trying to determine locations of them. Mr. Howard (Franklin Twp. Environmental Commission) stated that he has seen them a few years back in Franklin Township on the road. Ms. Altomari requested assistance from Mr. Howard on the location of public lands for access purposes and bog turtle habitats.

Mr. Davis questioned what could be said to homeowners that are worried about rules on "encroachment", not being able to do what they want to on their property, or if the results of the study are negative. Ms. Altomari stated that only new development would be restricted on encroachments within the 300' buffer. Previously disturbed properties (e.g. farmlands) can be allowed a 150' buffer. Ms. Altomari stated that the study will make general recommendations and suggest notification to homeowners that may be impacted by the results, or potential causes of the results (i.e. suggest not mowing, more plantings, more frequent septic pumping, etc.). A summary presentation of the study will be made at a public EC meeting, most likely in about March 2009. Following the study, the NJDEP does testing about every five years, which will update the data base.

V. New Business:

1. Mr. Nargi reported that the next Green Table meeting is on March 20, 2008 at 8:00 am at Echo Hill Lodge.
2. South Branch Water Authority is having their annual dinner. It costs \$50 for non-members and \$45 for members. Anybody interested in attending, the invitation will be on the EC desk.

VI. Chairmans Report:

1. Mr. Nargi stated that the South Branch is having their annual stream clean-up. This was brought up at the Township Committee Meeting to ask for help because the EC does not have anybody with available time to coordinate it. Rob Haynes and Matt Severino stated that they would get involved with this. VJ DiRoberto stated from the audience that he has about 20 kids to help and he has been working with Matt Severino and has already talked to the South Branch Water Authority. They may clean up several locations, including a section of Spruce Run Reservoir and a section of the Mulhockaway on Van Sickles Rd.

2. Mr. Nargi stated that a new contract has been finalized for the Sidney Brook Study. It has been signed by Nick Zripko of NJDEP. The South Branch is no longer involved, and Princeton Hydro will take over the work that the South Branch was previously going to do.
3. Mr. Nargi discussed the results of the Sidney Brook Study. Normally, Mondays and Fridays beginning at 9:00 am, they meet at the Municipal Bldg. to call homeowners and head out to do the visual assessment. They have already identified many problem stormwater erosion and non-retention areas, including the corner of Cooks Cross and Perryville, and the back of the school where stormwater seems to head toward the railroad tracks. He stated that the study is going well.

VII. **Committee Reports:**

Open Space Committee:

1. Ms. Stiger reported that four of the EC members have been going to the open space owned by the Township and look at all the buildings on the properties. A folder for each property will be left in the Township office. So far, they have visited each property, but will need to revisit them. At the Douglas property, they got in the bldg. and concluded that most repairs that would be required for renting it out are cosmetic. They would like to meet with the Township Committee and report the findings and make suggestions as to what may be done with the houses owned by the Township, since currently nothing is being done and they are deteriorating. They have visited some of the buildings on Hoffman Park also and concluded that one building needs a septic replacement. There are contractual alternatives to consider that other states have implemented, such as Massachusetts. An option is to allow a long term lease, probably at no rent, to someone that is capable of repairing the property to its historical value. The Hoffman Park main house is beautiful, but the huge basement has a roof collapsing issue in one section, which is a structural hazard and needs to be fenced off completely and filled in if possible. The EC group of four has been trying to go out on Fridays to visit the properties and make detailed assessments.
2. Bill Harclerode stated that he spoke with Earl Steves, who is a Union Twp. resident who works in property management and is willing to come out and look at the properties and give the EC some free advice. Bill provided Earl's phone number to Sandy to reach out to him.
3. Ms. Stiger also mentioned that the roof at the Hoffman House needs repair. Mr. Nargi stated that Mr. Beylickjian has been working on that, but we don't have current information. Mr. Nargi said that we could call Bob to get that estimate. Sandy stated that the roof and gutters need to be repaired, or the whole house is going to degrade significantly. Mr. Hurford inquired about possible historical grants for roof repairs for example. Mr. Nargi had looked into the historical aspects of it and had spoken to the County, and they would like to see it refurbished, but it is not considered "historical".
4. Mr. Nargi suggested that the EC start with one property, probably the Douglas property, to make use recommendations about to present to the Township Committee.
5. Ms. McBride stated that a long term plan needs to be developed for the three Township owned lands. Now that Milligan Farm has also been purchased, the Township has a lot of properties that have structures on them, and none of the properties are being maintained. She stated that the Township now has a tremendous amount of open space and needs to look at its resources and determine the best uses of the properties, and quickly. Maintenance issues can be identified quickly, and costs should be considered and fixes researched, but the alternative uses for the properties should be developed quickly so that we can start to utilize these properties. Ms. McBride suggested that Patricia Dziubek has offered to help us and John Wingler, a resident in the meeting audience that lives off of Van Sickles Rd., may be able to help. Other Union Twp. folks have offered to look over our shoulders and act as sounding boards on potential ideas as citizens. Ms. McBride suggested that we get the information and present findings to the Twp. Committee about once a month. Mr. Nargi stated that Pat Dziubek stated at the last Twp. Committee meeting, that she would help the group with the open space property issues and would bring information back to the EC.

6. Ms. Stiger has been trying to get the deeds for the properties from Peter Jost. She has gotten the title company. She is still trying to identify who is going to help with identifying the conservation easements.
7. Ms. McBride stated that there is a meeting tomorrow night with the NJWSA about conservation easements.
8. Mr. Nargi spoke with Bob O'Neill about getting another Spruce Run Initiative going. He has been looking into a joint grant with other Township EC's along the Corridor to join us and go for the ANJEC \$20,000 grant for conservation easements. All will need to work together as a team. UT may be up for \$3-5,000 of the grant, but we will have to get on it and see what we can do. The ANJEC grant application is due at the end of March. The NJWSA will do the drawings for us and the mapping. Ms. McBride that if this works out, we can get the easement work done and get the tax maps updated, and then we can update the open space plan. Ms. McBride reiterated that the open space plan is 5 yrs. old.
9. Mr. Nargi reiterated that any work, including open space work, done in the Sidney Brook area is reimbursable in-kind time under the Sidney Brook grant.

Equestrian Trails:

1. Mr. Beylickjian is not present. Mr. Nargi stated that he had spoken with Joanne Sotras and Katie Matthews and they want to see trails put in place, and they have signs that they want to put on the roadways. Mr. Nargi stated that they need to have a map of where the crossings will be and he offered to assist them in preparing a map of the trails and sign locations. There are various locations on the Hoffman tract and other Twp. properties that they would like to put the horse and walking trails onto. Mr. Nargi will work with the equestrian folks and then present to the Twp. Committee about getting the signs.

Planning Board:

1. Ms. Corcoran reported that at the Planning Bd. meeting 2/28/08, re: the PS Construction residential development site plan approval application, a few issues were raised that are to be addressed at the March meeting.
2. The Apgar property variance request was also deferred to the March meeting.
3. The Perryville Liquor Store proposed expansion, which is an application by Martin, was deferred due to a request by the applicant to reapply due to a floor area ratio (FAR) change.
4. Perryville Group, warehouse along Frontage Road, was approved with conditions for subdivision and site plan approval.
5. Lookout Pointe requested an extension to Final Site Plan Approval, which was denied by the Board.
6. At the Planning Board workshop on March 4, 2008, a few things were discussed preliminarily:
 - a. Mountain View Chalet proposed minor expansion.
 - b. Pole Barn on Charlestown Road, which is currently not an allowable use. Current wood chip storage activities are also not allowed.
 - c. Proposed 350 townhouse development at the large quarry on Frontage Road.
7. Ms. Corcoran stated that at the Planning Bd. meeting, Mr. Mazza stated the ordinances currently being considered by the Township Committee and being reviewed by the attorney. These include:
 - a. Engine Braking
 - b. No Idling
 - c. No Parking/Stopping/Standing
 The Planning Board unanimously said thanks to Bill Harclerode for all the efforts related to roadway noise issues.

Road Noise:

1. Mr. Harclerode reported that he is cautiously optimistic that the repaving of Rt. 78 will occur the Summer of 2008 with the low noise asphalt. He has heard that there is potentially \$16M available from another project that didn't move forward on schedule according to the NJTPA.
2. Un-muffled engine braking noise has received support for our proposed state bill for a \$500 un-muffled braking fine from Lebanon Twp., Bloomsbury, Clinton Twp. and the Town of

Clinton. We are going to move forward to our elected representatives from both parties and both houses.

3. The train crossing/whistling noise at the Perryville Rd. crossing was discussed. Mr. Harclerode spoke with Ted Frankenbach, who sent a letter to the Township. Mr. Harclerode spoke with the Mayor and has preliminarily pursued the quiet crossing of that intersection, including some on-line application forms. The railroad will likely come back to us with questions, etc. but this is the start.
4. Mr. Nargi stated that he has some information on some ordinances received from the County to pass on to Mr. Harclerode. Mr. Harclerode stated that the County is also with us on the engine braking issues.

VIII. **Communication and Education:**

The Commission expressed thanks and accolades to Michele McBride on her efforts on the successful EC newsletter. Mr. Nargi stated that he had received several phone calls with positive comments about the newsletter articles. Ms. McBride stated that, although it was a learning experience for her, she hopes that Neil Davis will be willing to work with her again on the next newsletter. Ms. McBride is hopeful that there will be a company willing to underwrite the next newsletter. A goal is the Fall of this year for the next newsletter. Mr. Davis stated that a large portion of the thanks needs to go to Ms. McBride and Mr. Nargi for the newsletter.

IX. **Adjournment:**

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Ms. Corcoran, seconded by Mr. Hurford, and approved by a 6-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Corcoran, Secretary